Average earnings growth in May similar to pre-pandemic

Media Release

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Source: Average Weekly Earnings, Australia, May 2021

Average weekly ordinary time earnings for full-time adults was $1,737 in May 2021, up 1.5 per cent from November 2020, according to new seasonally adjusted Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures released today.

Bjorn Jarvis, head of Labour Statistics at the ABS, said: ”In May 2020 we saw a major compositional shock in the labour market, with low paid jobs particularly affected by both job losses and government support. This led to a larger than usual increase in average weekly earnings at that time, which translated into a decline in average earnings in November 2020, as low paid jobs returned.”

“Since then, between November 2020 and May 2021, average weekly full-time earnings increased by 1.5 per cent ($26), which was similar to the increases we saw before the pandemic, including a 1.8 per cent increase ($29) in May 2019 and a 1.4 per cent increase ($24) in November 2019.”

May 2021 average weekly earnings were for the week ending 21 May, at which point there were no lockdowns in place.

In original series terms, Tasmania recorded the largest growth in the six months to May 2021 (2.2 per cent), but remained the lowest paid, on average, at $1,521. The Northern Territory was the only state or territory to record a negative movement in average weekly earnings, declining by 0.5 per cent to $1,695.

The Administrative and support services industry was one of only two industries that recorded a negative six-monthly movement and the only one with an average that was still below its pre-pandemic level. The Arts and recreation and Construction industries had the

largest six-monthly growth in average earnings, rising by 5.4 per cent and 4.0 per cent respectively.

Average weekly ordinary time earnings for full-time adult men grew by 1.8 per cent (to $1,837), which was higher than for women (up 0.9 per cent to $1,575) for just the second time since 2014. This was partly explained by the high average earnings growth in the Construction industry, which has a high proportion of men.

Media notes

- Percentage movements in average weekly earnings can be affected by changes in both the level of earnings per employee and in the composition of employment. Factors which can contribute to compositional change include variations in the proportion of full-time, part-time, casual and junior employees; variations in the occupational distribution within and across industries; and variations in the distribution of employment between industries.
- Estimates of percentage change have been calculated using unrounded estimates and may be different from, but are more accurate than, movements obtained from calculating percentage changes using the rounded estimates presented in this publication.
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